

THE BENGAL-ORISSA MISSION*

of the

AMERICAN BAPTIST FOREIGN MISSION SOCIETY

THIS mission, established by the Free Baptists in 1838 and administered by the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society since October 1, 1911, deserves to be better known by the entire denomination. In no field in India have we so large a proportion of the intellectual class among the converts. Among them are very able leaders, some of whom are placed in charge of stations that have no resident missionary.

THE FIELD

The field is located to the west and south-west of Calcutta. The north-eastern border is about twenty-five miles, and the southern end is 150 miles from Calcutta. Two districts, Midnapore and Balasore, are commonly reckoned as comprising the field proper. But the three native states of Mourbhunj, Nilgiri and Keonjhar, along the western side of the two districts, have been visited by our missionaries, and are claimed for this field because they are out of reach of any other Protestant mission.

Midnapore district has an area of a little over 5,000 square miles and a population of 2,800,000. One section of this, Tamluk, with an area of 650 square miles and a population of 600,000 has been assigned to the Methodists who can work it from Calcutta. Balasore has an area of 2,000 square miles and a population of 1,000,000. The area of the three native states is about 5,500 square miles and their population 1,200,000.

The country in the two districts is mostly level and much of it so low as to be subject to inundation in the rains. The soil is usually fertile. Rice is the common crop. Garden truck is raised and jute is being raised more and more. All the inhabitants live off the soil. Only a small area in the north in Midnapore district, and another in the south of Balasore, can be irrigated, so the crop depends on the rainfall. Consequently scarcity and famine are a constant menace. This, together with the density of the population, keeps the people exceedingly poor.

There are no large centers of population: Midnapore, the largest town, has 33,000 people. Balasore has 20,000. These towns are the headquarters of their respective districts. Midnapore district has nearly 8,500 villages, and Balasore over 3,300. These villages vary in size from a few houses to several hundred. They are largest and most numerous in the northern and southern ends of each district because of the large rivers.

Midnapore is in the presidency of Bengal, and Balasore in the province of Bihar-Orissa, at the Orissa end of it. The mission is therefore called the Bengal-Orissa Mission. The inhabitants of Midnapore are chiefly Bengalis, but in the western and less fertile part of the district are about 150,000 Santals. There are some Oriyas in the southern part. Balasore is inhabited by Oriyas. The Bengalis and Oriyas are Hindus, with all the shades of religious belief and unbelief, practices and castes, that go under that name. Perhaps in no part of India are they more bigoted than here. The Santals are Animists, and are much more open to approach and conviction of the truth than the Hindus. There are some 30,000 Mohammedans in Balasore and a larger number in Midnapore.

Stations, Missionaries and Native Workers

Nine mission stations have been opened: Balasore, Jellasure, Midnapore, Santipore, Bhimpore, Chandbali, Bhadrak, Contai, and Kharagpur. Four

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of these stations, Jellasure, Chandbali, Bhadrak and Contai have no resident missionary, the work being cared for either by a missionary in charge of some other field or by a native brother.

There are some seventeen out-stations, where trained men live with their families and seek to win new converts and to build up the Christians. Schools for boys and girls are maintained in a number of villages and are taught by Christians or are visited regularly by a Christian inspector.

There are now seven missionary families on the field, and nine single women. Two of the men and one woman are physicians. One of the families and three of the women are new arrivals. For assistants there are twelve ordained men and thirty-two preachers or evangelists. There are half a dozen colporters and thirty Bible women and about 250 school teachers, of whom 150 are Christians and about half of these women. The work is conducted in three languages,—Bengali, Oriya, and Santali, with a little in English and Telugu.

Balasore

Balasore, the oldest station, was occupied in 1838. It is 144 miles by rail from Calcutta, and is the administrative headquarters of the district which is named for it. The institutional work of the mission is here most extensive and diversified. It has twelve brick buildings. There are separate, well-conducted orphanages, or homes, for boys and girls, a home for widows, a fine kindergarten, a primary school for boys and several for girls, a middle English (grammar) school for girls, and a good high school for boys (including the grammar grades) a good industrial school for boys which teaches carpentry, iron work, cane work, book-binding, tailoring and gardening, and a flourishing work among the women of the zenanas. The church is the oldest and strongest in the mission. It has about 300 members and contributed to all causes 999 rupees, which provided 728 rupees for its own support, 124 rupees for the poor, seventy-four rupees for home missions, and seventy-three rupees for out-station school work. It has a pastor who preaches with power. Twenty-six converts were added by baptism of whom twenty-four were from the schools. Miss Lena M. Fenner of Providence, R. I., a member of the Judson Party, who remained at Balasore as a volunteer worker, has given splendid service. There are six out-stations worked from Balasore and the three stations of Chandbali, seventy-five miles distant, Bhadrak, forty-four miles, and Jellasure, twenty-eight miles, are generally assisted from this station because they have no resident missionary. These stations are all in Balasore district and the two latter are on the railway.

Chandbali is a small port visited regularly by steamers from Calcutta and by launches from Cuttack. It is thirty-five miles from the railroad and is in immediate charge of an Oriya Christian. He is the head-master of the middle English school of seventy-five pupils and looks after the eleven outside village schools as best he can. Two preachers and a Bible woman or two usually live here. The church has forty members, only twenty of whom are resident. It contributed about forty-two rupees. There is one out-station. Bhadrak has had no missionary for many years. There is one preacher and a good primary school for girls. Jellasure was the second station occupied in the field, but in later years it has been so malarious that missionaries have lived there for short periods only. There is a small church, a little community of Christians, an upper primary school and a little outside work.

Santipore

Santipore is another station in this district. It is eight miles off the railroad and thirty-five miles north of Balasore. It has middle schools for boys and

girls, an industrial school, where weaving is the chief industry taught, and a number of primary schools. Two lady missionaries are in charge, of whom one is a physician, Mary W. Bachelor, M.D. There are two or three preachers, a colporter or two, and some Bible women and zenana workers. This work grew up because of an attempt to colonize the early converts on land taken up by the missionaries. By means of a dam across a small stream, irrigation has been possible, and a small area has been profitably cultivated. There are elements of hopefulness in the outlook. The kindergarten work is strong. The head mistress is very satisfactory and of the fifty pupils, all but two are from Christian homes.

Midnapore

Midnapore is the largest city in the field, and has 33,000 people. It is eighty-two miles by rail from Calcutta. There are a number of primary schools for children of the poor, a fine middle school for girls and another for boys and a large zenana work. Here, too, is the Bible school in charge of Rev. A. L. Kennan, where the preachers and pastors of the mission are trained. The church is large and nearly independent. Three out-stations are looked after from this center. Rev. J. A. Howard and Mrs. Howard who have spent two years in the language school at Calcutta will devote themselves to evangelistic work. Mrs. J. P. Burkholder, Mrs. Ida M. Holder and Miss Ruth Daniels arrived in November, 1914, to strengthen the work for girls and women.

Bhimpore

Bhimpore, eighteen miles north of Midnapore, off the railway line, is the center of a flourishing work among the Santals, a hill tribe, the entire educational work for whom the government has made over to this mission. There are orphanages for boys and girls and boarding schools for each up to the middle standard with eighty-five pupils in attendance. Provision is made for industrial training and there is a large medical work, centering in Sterling Memorial Hospital. There were 7,680 cases treated at the dispensary last year. The church is large and self-supporting and the Christians are erecting a brick dormitory for the orphanage. There are five or six out-stations and sixty primary schools in the neighboring villages. The mission is working shoulder to shoulder with the educational department of the government for the uplift of the Santals and enjoys the confidence of the authorities to a large degree. At the same time the confidence of these people is being gained and numbers of them are turning towards Christianity. Rev. H. R. Murphy, M.D., the energetic missionary in charge uses a motor cycle for travel among the villages and longs for a flying machine with which to reach the villages in the hills, inaccessible by motor cycle.

Contai, thirty-five miles from the railroad, near the coast, is the center of a very populous part of the district. Mission work here is conducted wholly by Indian workers and consists in evangelistic endeavor with systematic visitation of many neighboring schools to tell the boys about Jesus. A little medical work is also done with good effect.

Kharagpur

Kharagpur is the youngest of the stations. It is a large and growing railway center with a considerable number of people, perhaps 3,000, who use English. So there is an important work for these people, centering in an attractive edifice where a union church worships. There is also a splendid opportunity for work among the native population who flock to the town, and are often

more accessible to the gospel than in their old environment. So there is a native church also, which shows considerable vigor, and a primary school is carried on for the children of the Christians and a few others.

Rev. Z. D. Browne and Mrs. Browne joined the mission in November 1914. The health of Mr. Oxrieder was greatly impaired under a burden of overwork and he has been ordered to the hills for three months to recover after which he is to take up work at Santipore.

Results Attained

There are nineteen organized churches in the Bengal-Orissa mission with a total membership of about 1,600 and a community of double that number. There are over 4,000 in the schools of the missions and fully that number are in Sunday schools or receive regular instruction in the Scriptures. The educational work of the mission has done much to create a favorable sentiment toward the message. Industrial training for Christians is regarded as of great importance. For the training of women teachers the mission unites with the English Baptists of Cuttack for the Oriya speaking section of the field, and sends the Bengali girls to Calcutta for training. Temperance instruction has always been to the fore, and the churches have a fixed rule against the use of intoxicants and narcotics. The missionaries of this field have subscribed 100 rupees a month toward the support of a German missionary family who were deprived of their support by the cruel European War.

Rev. G. H. Hamlen, D.D., and Mrs. Hamlen, who have had twenty years' service at Balasore and are now in America on furlough, undertook at the camp meeting at Ocean Park, Maine, July 23, 1914, to raise \$2,000 to send out a missionary family. Mrs. Hamlen pledged one-sixth of the sum. The amount was raised and Mr. and Mrs. Browne were sent.

New Recruits

Although this mission has been short-handed most of the year, it now rejoices in five new missionaries, one of whom, Miss Amorette Porter, admirably expresses her first impressions of the situation in which she finds herself: "When one, who has been in this country less than two months, is asked to write her impressions of it, she is tempted to refuse to do this, especially after she has heard how foolish all newcomers' ideas are to those who have been here longer. This year very evidently must be one of watching and learning. Oh, that we may be teachable! Not for a moment have I regretted coming; rather have I been sorry that so many people in the home country can never have the opportunity. The country is far more beautiful and pleasant to live in than I expected, and the conditions of living make earnest, serious work possible. Though I had loved the people of India for years, yet I find them now more dear to me than I had imagined they could be. Their faults and weaknesses only make them human like myself. There are many ways in which we can be a help to them and it is good to feel that, slowly and steadily, as I learn the language and the ways of life and thought, they may be learning that I am their friend and the messenger of the great Friend."

FOR additional copies of this pamphlet or information regarding the work of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, write to any of the following:

1. The nearest District Secretary.
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